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ABSTRACT

One of the changes advocated by the Regular Education Initiative (REI) is the placement of all students with disabilities in regular education classes. This paper analyzes this REI proposal and discusses four objections, with citations to relevant literature: (1) restriction of the continuum of services, which may result in students being put through the motions of mainstreaming for purposes of social integration without either the existence of, or planning for, measurable learning; (2) immunity from accountability at the risk of ignoring less intrusive interventions, the implementation of flawed research, and a poor return on funding; (3) deficits in the research base used to justify REI proposals which risks the dangers of impulsive implementations based on outdated research; and (4) the dangers of ignoring current data, unprofessionally using data by excluding conflicting data and drawing conclusions that are not supported by the data, making unprofessional decisions, and attempting reform that does not integrate accumulated knowledge. The document contains 82 references. (BRM)

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Four Data Based Objections
to the Regular Education Initiative

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Abstract

The Regular Education Initiative advocates placement of 100% of the handicapped in regular education classes as well as a number of other educational reforms related to special education. These rationales or proposals have been analyzed in relation to research data which are available. The authors believe additional research is needed and that proponents of this reform have actually ignored relevant data.

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Four Data Based Objections to the Regular Education Initiative as Programmatic Policy

The con side of the Regular Education Initiative (REI) has been debated in the professional literature during the past two years (Anderegg & Vergason, 1989; Braaten, Kauffman, Braaten, Polsgrove & Nelson, 1988; Gartner & Lipsky, 1987; Hallahan, Keller, McKinney, Lloyd, & Bryan, 1988; Kauffman, 1989; Kauffman, Gerber, & Semmel, 1988; Singer, 1988; Vergason & Anderegg, 1989a; Vergason & Anderegg, 1989b). Prior to that time, the proponents' view of the movement dominated the literature (Lilly, 1986, 1987; Reynolds, Wang, & Walberg, 1987; Stainback & Stainback, 1984, 1987; Wang, Reynolds, & Walberg, 1986; Will, 1984, 1986). Even so, there are professionals who are still undecided concerning the issues of the initiative and many professionals in the schools have yet to hear about the REI.

In this paper, we will clarify some of the concerns the opponents of this movement have. We cannot hope, in the space allotted, to explain fully our opposition to the REI proposals. For that description, the reader will need to refer to the resolution introduced by Glenn Vergason

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at the International Conference of the Council for Exceptional Children in San Francisco (1989) and to the position paper published by the Division of Behavior Disorders (Braaten, et al, 1987). Here we are describing briefly four of the data based objections which are shared by opponents of the Regular Education Initiative and specifying some of the dangers which are the root of each objection.

The four objections we have are:

- (1) The restriction of the continuum of services,
- (2) The request for immunity from accountability,
- (3) The deficits in the research base used to justify REI proposals, and
- (4) The assumptions which ignore existing data.

The Objection: Restricting the continuum of services

The first objection to the REI proposals is the insistence on the mainstream as the only setting for the education of handicapped children. To describe for you the full anathema of the demand for 100% mainstreaming, which REI proposes, it is necessary to communicate the importance of the availability of a full continuum of services.

In 1962, Maynard Reynolds, now an advocate of the REI movement, proposed a continuum of services which offered a variety of settings for educating all handicapped children. At that time, legislation such as P. L. 94-142 was only a twinkle in a very few eyes. The continuum Reynolds proposed was revolutionary then and is still relevant and necessary today.

Later in 1975, when the Education for the Handicapped Act (P. L. 94-142) was passed, public school systems were opened to handicapped individuals. Interestingly enough, REI proponents reflect a misuse of the term "least restrictive environment" as that term was originally used. Turnbull (1990), in his most recent book, describes the history of the term "least restrictive environment". The original term was "least restrictive alternative" which more clearly differentiated the focus on instruction apart from proximal considerations.

In the deliberations, discussions, and testimony which occurred in preparing P. L. 94-142, the emphasis was on choosing, on an individual basis, the environment which provided the maximum interaction with nonhandicapped peers while providing the instructional

alternative which was least restrictive to the child's learning opportunities. In those deliberations it was acknowledged that, in some cases, a placement which geographically restricted proximity to nonhandicapped learners might actually provide the best alternative to permit the child to benefit from instruction. The focus was then, and should be now, on maintaining a balance between the right of the child to an appropriate education and the need of the child for social interactions with nonhandicapped peers. Subsequent legal decisions have upheld that emphasis (Daniel R. R. v. El Paso, 1989; Hudson v. Rowley, 1982; Kruelle v. New Castle County School District, 1981; Roncker v. Walters, 1983; Silvo v. Commonwealth Department of Education, 1982; Wilson v. Marana Unified School District No. 6, 1984).

We now see the foresight of the legislators who formulated P. L. 94-142 jeopardized as the most recent proposals (Stainback & Stainback, 1985, 1989) call for putting all handicapped children in the mainstream classroom all of the time. Suggestions for facilitating this 100% mainstreaming include consultation models, collaboration models, and the use of special educators in the

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regular classroom. But, the implementations, so far, bear a closer look.

One such implementation, for example, places severely handicapped children in a regular classroom reading group. In that implementation, the handicapped children are engaged in being what Herb Goldstein calls "easel children" (personal communication, 1989). What that means is that during reading group, the handicapped child's participation consists of holding flashcards, turning pages, and pointing to reading charts while their peers read.

In another example, one implementation is described in the literature as providing a "regular placement" to a "nonverbal, hearing impaired and profoundly mentally retarded" young woman (Education of the Handicapped, 1989, p. 9). The description of what the young woman is gaining is glowing but the absence of achievement measures, even in the area of social skills, prevents our endorsing the practices described. These activities are not consistent with a recent ruling in *Daniel R. R. v. El Paso* (1989).

In one situation the handicapped child "rides the school bus with her teacher, keeps a locker, and has a

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homeroom class". These activities are all consistent with the findings of researchers (Eichinger, 1990; Meyer & Kishi, 1985; Stainback & Stainback, 1985) as appropriate nonacademic interactions. Robert Davila (1990), in response to recent inquiries, acknowledged these activities as appropriate nonacademic mainstreaming.

The further activities of the young woman in the above implementation, however, included "hand-over-hand" activities with her own teacher in art, music, and the computer rooms. None of these types of activities are supported in the research on successful integrations as predictive of gains in integrative social interactions. Not only do these "hand-over-hand" activities not represent good practice for integrated acceptance by nonhandicapped peers, these passive responses are not effective teaching practices (Rosenshine, 1977, 1983). So these implementations are neither good mainstreaming nor effective teaching.

In the home economics class, the same student (Education of the Handicapped, 1989) was reported to engage in "parallel activities, such as pasting while other students sew". The home economics placement

appears to be more activity driven than skill driven. The experimenter describing this particular implementation concluded "She's learning at least as much as she would in a school for severely disabled students" (p. 9). This conclusion ignores the lack of achievement or social skills measures.

An assumption of successful social integration cannot be made in these latter activities since only one of the three primary requisites reported by Allport (1958) exists. Allport's findings have been substantiated by others (Cole, Vandercook & Rynders, 1988; Tateyama-Sniezek, 1990) in their inquiries into cooperative learning. The three characteristics are (1) presence of common goals between handicapped and nonhandicapped students, (2) equal status in the group, and (3) support by administration. The implementations described in Education of the Handicapped (1989) were characterized only by support by the administration.

The sad part is that extravagant resources are being invested in putting these young people through the motions of mainstreaming without either the existence or planning for measurable results. But the real travesty is that some of the children involved, though teenagers,

are squandering valuable instructional time in ineffectual role plays which should be invested in developing independence as an adult.

Danger: The Loss of Instructional Relevance

In just the two implementations described above, the dangers of restricting the continuum of services should be obvious. First, in a wholesale mainstream situation, the child's needs often are not met. To be sure, some children will have their needs met, but those children would most likely have been mainstreamed anyway. They have neither gained nor lost. But, for the student who exhibits lower levels of functioning such as we have described above, the mainstreaming setting is restrictive of the amount of independence training which can and should occur.

Depriving these children of substantive educational experiences which will promote increased independence is not defensible. To strip handicapped students of their legal rights to an "APPROPRIATE" education is not legally, ethically, or morally defensible.

Danger: The Violation of Due Process

One last danger inherent in restricting the continuum of services is the fact that placements are

predetermined by policy. Placements in wholesale mainstreaming are not considered on an individual case-by-case basis. Placements lacking consideration on an individual basis result in what Turnbull and Fiedler call "functional exclusion". This functional exclusion deprives the child of an appropriate education which is one of the basic rights under the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments (Turnbull & Fiedler, 1985). These amendments protect the citizen with both procedural and substantive due process against arbitrary limitations of basic rights by the agents of the governing authority. Thus, the government is not immune from accountability to its citizens.

Immunity from accountability

We object to the call by some for immunity from accountability (Reynolds, 1988) as research models are developed to restructure totally the whole public educational system. The marketing theme used to promote what REI proponents call "waivers for performance" is the need for more research and the use of such waivers in testing Medicaid reforms (Reynolds, 1988). The justification for waivers with cries of the need for ongoing research efforts is what, in business, is called

the "motherhood ploy". After all, who would dare to oppose either "motherhood" or the need for ongoing research?

The catch is, some REI proponents want to be provided with research funds to pursue models which in the past have demonstrated questionable replications. Fuchs and Fuchs (1988) demonstrated, for example, that the showcase model of the REI has failed to produce results which are statistically significant. Now, these same individuals want to continue replicating their models without complying with existing regulations to continue the funding of flawed research.

Danger: Implementation of Flawed Research

The first danger in permitting waivers is the risk of implementing flawed research. It is significant to note that the original proposals for waivers from immunity were made within the context of the Adaptive Learning Environment Model (ALEM) as the showcase of the REI movement. Since that model has drawn criticism (Anderegg & Vergason, 1988; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1988; Hallahan, et al, 1988; Kauffman, Gerber & Semmel, 1988), some proponents (Wang, Reynolds & Walberg, 1989) have tried to change the context for their calls for immunity

by claiming the ALEM is not representative of the initiative. Some of the proponents of the initiative have urged we move ahead with the waivers even if ALEM is not the model. Reynolds (1988) has gone so far as to say "We've [special educators] always been ahead of the legislation. It's time to forge ahead again and let the law catch up with us." We propose that immunity from the regulations violates the principle of least intrusive intervention on which sound scientific practice is based.

Danger: Ignoring Less Intrusive Intervention

The violation of the scientific principle of least intrusive intervention is the second danger of immunity from regulations. History has shown that less intrusive means do not necessarily need to be immune from accountability. Prereferral systems, for example, operate in 34 states and, in some of these, the prereferral system is mandatory. These systems do not require restructuring the whole educational system nor do they require immunity.

Hayek (1987), in his review of prereferral systems, found that regular education interventions occur before any referral to special education is even considered.

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He also found that multiple interventions, based on work samples and observations rather than on standardized test scores, were implemented and documented. In the 21 states where prereferral is mandatory, the outcome has been a decrease in special education referrals, placements, and costs (Carter & Sugai, 1989). These three decreases are goals claimed by the REI proponents but, interestingly enough, prereferral is not required in states where the REI movement is strongest.

The second advance which has been developed without immunity is the use of Curriculum Based Assessment (Deno & Fuchs, 1987). These procedures reduce special education placements and costs while increasing the achievement of all learners.

Curriculum based assessment is notable for its repeated assessment of measures drawn directly from the curriculum. The practice of drawing measures directly from the curriculum and basing subsequent instruction on the results is what Bloom (1954, 1976, 1984) called objective driven instruction. Cohen (1987) was able, in related objective driven instruction, to produce some effect sizes in excess of the 2 sigma that Bloom and his students were able to achieve.

In curriculum based instruction, measures are derived directly from what is taught. The learner is not tested on untaught materials. Learners (Cohen, 1987) are tested at the same response levels they have been taught and guided through practice and application. Thus, the effect of test taking skills is eliminated from their scores. Testing learners on materials not yet taught is one of the objections to the use of standardized tests (Fuchs et al, 1987).

What is interesting is that the states with a high emphasis on wholesale mainstreaming and model development do not practice prereferral or Curriculum Based Assessment to any marked degree. Instead the educational researchers in states such as Illinois and Pennsylvania, as examples, have chosen to work toward the development of comprehensive models which ignore the scientific principle of least intrusive intervention. The REI supporters are not ignorant of the advances we have noted.

Danger: Poor Return on Funding

A third obvious danger to removing accountability is the educational abuse it would court. We cannot afford to invest a whole generation's future in

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theoretical scavenger hunts. We have done that already. Those who remember process training and Domain-Delacato, to name but two abandoned approaches, are aware of the fruitlessness of teaching the child found only in theoretical constructs.

We see this third danger of the REI as equally insidious. The investment of research dollars must be prudently guarded. There are always too few educational dollars and already former supporters of educational research are becoming disenchanted with the uses that have been made of such funds. Recently, for example, more than \$2 million dollars was invested in researching what happens to cats when they are shot in the head (Nossiter, 1989). The same conclusions reached in that study were first published in 1894. This particular abuse prompted one congressman to comment privately, "I wonder how many cats are being shot in education."

The few research funds education has, only 0.2% of all federally funded research (Holeton, 1990), must be prudently invested in developing new technologies and expanding proven technologies which do not require immunity or exorbitant resources to maintain. As an example of technologies requiring exorbitant resources,

one recent noncategorical model involved such complex record keeping that a main frame computer was required to maintain the records (Felix, Hertlein, McKenna, & Rayborn, 1987). This methodology was implemented for the sake of saying a noncategorical model was used. No replications of that effort were found in the literature.

Deficits in the research base

Many of the claims of the REI proponents are based on rationales derived from data collected in the early era of implementation of P. L. 94-142. Those data (Panda & Bartel, 1972; Shotel, Ianno, & McGettigger, 1972; Silberman, 1969; Siperstein, Bepp, & Bak, 1978) were used in preference to more recent data (Bak, Cooper, Dobroth, & Siperstein, 1987; Carter & Sugai, 1989; Hayek, 1987; Rich & Ross, 1989; Schumaker & Deshler, 1988; Siperstein & Goding, 1985; Zigmond, 1990). The more recent findings were ignored. The REI proposals were implemented with no attempt by proponents to resolve the disagreements between the data from the two eras. We consider such implementations, at best, to be impulsive.

Danger: Impulsive Implementations

The first danger in basing innovation on outdated research is the danger of premature implementations. We believe the quantification of the rationales of the REI provide a clear illustration of this impulsivity.

Some proponents of the REI (Stainback & Stainback, 1984; Will, 1984, 1986) have suggested there are three rationales for the implementation of the Regular Education Initiative. Where support was offered for the rationales, the research had originated in the seventies very soon after the initial implementation of the provisions of P. L. 94-142. No direct quantification was offered.

In their first rationale for the REI, Stainback and Stainback (1984) suggest that the relationship between regular and special education was so fragmented that the two areas are in competition for resources. Further, these authors suggested that special education has become a dumping ground for the problems regular education can not or will not address. In their second rationale for the REI, Stainback and Stainback have joined Will (1984, 1986) in saying that regular educators need to be retrained in effective teaching methodology. The

inference is that regular educators neither know nor practice effective teaching in the regular classroom. The third rationale for implementation of the REI is that there are no differences in the performance characteristics of special education students and other low achievers who do not receive special education services.

Anderegg (1989) quantified these three rationales by drawing from current literature. The rationales were then exposed to the scrutiny of regular educators. Garrison (1990), using the same instrument, is currently analyzing data from special education teachers. Her results are almost a mirror image of the Anderegg data from regular educators. Smith (1990) is asking the same questions of administrators from both general education and special education. Those results are not expected to differ substantially from the responses of frontline educators.

In their responses to the REI proposals of the relationship between regular and special educators (Anderegg, 1989), 464 regular educators saw regular and special education as unified, working toward a common goal, separated by teacher training, and differences in

student needs. The regular educators who collected the data demonstrated such unity that they included their special education colleagues in the data collection process in regular education faculty meetings.

When questioned about the inclusion of the teachers with special education certifications, one responded, "They work side by side with us every day. It doesn't matter what their certification says." (Redmond, personal communication, 1988).

In addition these regular educators, contrary to what Will (1986) and other proponents of REI have said they were capable of, clearly identified 11 effective teaching practices as facilitative to mainstreaming success. Madeline Will (1986) has said regular educators need more training to learn what effective teaching is. The educators Anderegg and Garrison questioned demonstrated they not only knew but valued the techniques which have been quantified and replicated in the effective teaching research.

Lastly, the regular educators clearly defined inter and extra group differences between the performance characteristics of special education low achievers and other nonhandicapped low achievers. Garrison's data

from special education practitioners, though statistically significant, were not quite as strong as the ones identified by regular educators who were familiar with both groups of low achievers. None of the differences the regular educators identified have been quantified in the identification and placement literature which the REI proponents reference to substantiate their claims of no differences. One reason may be that the characteristics the frontline educators were surveyed about are more likely to surface in daily classroom interactions than in isolated, one-to-one testing situations or ivory towers.

As far as the current authors know, these three studies are the only attempts to evaluate the rationales of the REI proponents. There have been several less ambitious studies of the feasibility and desirability of REI implementation but the samples have been small, generally confined to a single state or from school districts selected for convenience (Coates, 1989; Harris, 1988). When the Anderegg study originated, no data concerning the rationales, desirability, or feasibility were found in the literature. Granted, publication does take time but, the REI proposals are

more than five years old. Surely, the rationales of a movement should be supported by research before the implementations based on those rationales occur.

The data quoted by the REI proponents did not directly address those questions inherent to implementation such as the validity of the rationales or the desirability and feasibility of implementation. The REI proponents used outdated data to support their arguments and ignored a significant body of more current data which would have undermined their arguments.

Ignoring current data

The fourth objection we have to the REI concerns the REI assumptions which contradict the available data. As has been reiterated in the professional literature, many of the charges concerning labeling effects and resource room results are anchored in data not drawn from the current decade. The more recent data paint a very different picture.

Danger: Unprofessional Use of Data

The first danger in ignoring current data is the unprofessional use of data which results. There are basically two ways in which the current data have been ignored by REI proponents. The first way is simply not

to include data which do not support their contentions. Examples of this manner of ignoring current data include the data from prereferral implementations, curriculum based measures, the Learning Disabilities' Institutes, and Direct Instruction. The second way to ignore data, divorcing the results from the conclusions, is more insidious.

One example of the second way of misusing data is found in a recent study of the way time is used in the resource room. The data from Rich and Ross (1989) showed the resource room to be superior to regular classrooms, special classrooms, and special schools in engaged academic time. That same study indicated there were additional differences in engaged academic time by category of handicapping condition.

These authors, like some others (Ysseldyke, Thurlow, O'Sullivan, & Christenson, 1989; Haynes & Jenkins, 1986) were so eager to find support for their predetermined conclusions that they focused on the number of minutes rather than on the percentage of time spent. This focus was mathematically unsound because unequivalent metrics were treated as though they were comparable. Thus, their conclusions did not match their

data. Had we contented ourselves with reading their conclusions rather than examining the methodology and data (Anderegg & Vergason, 1989), we would have missed the significance of those findings in the same way that REI supporters have done. McKinney and Hocutt (1988a, 1988b) define the practice of reframing questions so the results support predetermined conclusions as a choice of policy advocacy over policy analysis.

The professional literature reverberates with charges by leaders in the REI movement that resource rooms fail to provide high levels of engaged learning time and that there are no differences in the performance characteristics of any one group of low achievers from another (Algozzine, 1985; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, Shinn, & McGue, 1982). The Rich and Ross study described above did examine the variables affecting learning of various groups of low achievers, both handicapped and nonhandicapped. Their research suggests that the resource room in terms of engaged time can be more effective than the regular classroom. Thus to abandon the resource room would be an irresponsible decision.

Findings such as the Rich and Ross study described above, if we look beyond the conclusions to the data, combine the variables of other studies which continue to define the contributions of the resource room to learning and the differences in performance characteristics of various groups of low achievers, both handicapped and nonhandicapped. But, REI proponents would have the resource room dismantled.

Danger: Unprofessional Decision Making

The decision to dismantle resource rooms is but one example of the second danger of the unprofessional decision making which can result from ignoring current data. Changes in teacher training, sociological factors, mainstream experiences, and even the media have altered the way both teachers and students perceive handicapped persons. One outgrowth of those changes, as a recent study showed, is that labels often set the stage for increased social acceptance in the mainstream (Smith, 1989).

The same dangerous result exists when we shop the old data as when we call for immunity to accountability. We then make programmatic decisions and individual instructional decisions on an unprofessional basis.

When we make decisions on an unprofessional basis, we risk violation of what we know to be the best scientific practice and the right of human subjects not to be harmed by the activity in which they are involved. Violation of best scientific practice endangers the growth of knowledge in our field.

Danger: Professional Stagnation

The third danger in ignoring recent research is the stagnation of knowledge in the field of education, in general, and in educational reform, in particular. Ernest Boyer (1989) indicated in a recent speech to a teacher training faculty that reform which does not integrate accumulated knowledge is destined to repeat the current cycle of problems. If we are unwilling to use the data we have, further research is useless.

Summary

Slavin (1989) suggests that if education is to rid itself of faddism it must, "first change the ground rules under which innovations are selected, implemented, evaluated, and institutionalized" (p. 755). Slavin charges that faddism is the result when intuitively appealing practices are implemented without substantiating research data. We have described four

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objections to the REI rooted in research data which we believe exemplify the faddism Slavin warned against. While poodle skirts and hoola hoops represent nostalgic fads with no harm done; we have described the dangers inherent when educational practice implements fads instead of research based programs. By doing so, we hope to prompt educators to assume a more responsible, data based stance in proposing change.

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